

VZCZCXRO5073
RR RUEHDE
DE RUEHDE #0992/01 0531334
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 221334Z FEB 06
FM AMCONSUL DUBAI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8609
INFO RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 1304
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 1529
RUEHZM/GCC C COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBAI 000992

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/21/2016

TAGS: [TC](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#)

SUBJECT: AS PRIME MINISTER, MBR SIGNALS NEW HANDS-ON APPROACH

CLASSIFIED BY: Jason L. Davis, Consul General, Dubai, UAE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1.(U) With the 40-day mourning period for his late brother Maktoum now concluded, Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum (MbR), the new Prime Minister of the UAE, has undertaken a number of high-visibility actions to demonstrate that he takes his new national-level responsibilities seriously, including trips to the northern emirates of Fujairah, Sharjah and Ajman to inspect public facilities and social welfare institutions. MbR also called on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, praising its role and asking for innovative approaches to boost its performance. During the course of this informal outreach program -- widely covered in local press and television -- MbR has emphasized that he intends to both empower individual ministers, and hold them accountable for their actions.

Fujairah: Improve the Schools and Healthcare

2.(U) On February 18 MbR visited Fujairah schools and a hospital and met with citizens. The Arabic language daily al-Ittihad reported that after touring several schools to evaluate their condition, he directed the new Education Minister, Dr. Hanif Hassan Ali, to adopt measures to improve the learning environment there. MbR then went to the Fujairah Central Hospital and called for the Minister of Public Works -- Sheikh Hamdan bin Mubarak al-Nahyan, a holdover from the last cabinet -- to acquire advanced medical equipment to improve its quality of care. He also met with a number of Fujairah citizens who had housing complaints and ordered maintenance work to be done on the homes of low-income citizens, according to Emirates Today newspaper.

Sharjah and Ajman: Help the Poor and Elderly

3.(U) MbR continued his outreach the next day in Sharjah and Ajman, where his visit was said to be aimed at "assessing the needs of the underprivileged." He visited the Sharjah Comprehensive Unit for Social Care and the Center for Social Affairs to be briefed on the services they provide and the needs of both facilities, according to Al Khaleej newspaper. He did the same at the Ajman Center for People with Special Needs and Center for Elderly People. MbR called on the Minister of Social Affairs -- a newly established cabinet position held by the UAE's second female minister Mariam Mohammad Khalfan Al Roumi -- to meet any requirements these institutions have, according to the Arabic language daily Al Bayan. Photographs of MbR sitting on the floor with lower income UAE nationals and laying his hand on the heads of elderly subjects were featured prominently in the local print media.

MFA: Embrace Its "Sacred National Responsibility"

4.(C) MbR visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Abu Dhabi on February 21, where he met with several cabinet members, including the Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Sheikh Abdullah reportedly welcomed the visit, describing it as an opportunity for ministry officials to listen to the directives of MbR, according to Gulf News newspaper. MbR praised the role of the MFA, stressing its "sacred national responsibility" to represent the UAE, and urging innovative approaches to boost productivity. Mohammad Hussain Al Sha'ali, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, was also present, and told the Ambassador the following day it was the first "high-level" visit to the MFA since Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan stopped in many years ago.

5.(U) In a February 21 announcement covered in all the major English and Arabic newspapers, MBR said that ministries would be given "full administrative and financial independence" to improve their services and performance. "Complicated restrictions and procedures will be scrapped to give them a free hand in discharging their duties," he continued.

Comment

6.(C) A number of prominent Dubayyans have told us, with obvious approval, that MbR intends to follow the example of his father, the late Sheikh Rashid, who is remembered as an active and forceful PM prior to succumbing to a lengthy and debilitating illness. (The late Sheikh Maktoum, MbR's older brother, is remembered fondly, but he made not even a pretence of guiding or managing the UAE cabinet of ministers, and indeed spent most of his time in London.) While Dubai notables are clearly pleased

DUBAI 00000992 002 OF 002

(and in the case of the "let's grow slower" faction, relieved) that MBR and his top "Dubai, Inc" deputy Mohammed Al Gergawi (newly appointed as Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs) will now be dedicating much of their time to federal affairs, there remains great curiosity as to who will end up managing Dubai's affairs on a day-to-day basis. Despite MbR's visits to Fujairah, Sharjah and Ajman, it is unlikely that he will make similar trips to public institutions in Abu Dhabi, demurring to the ruling Al Nahyan family's role.

DAVIS